



Christiana Weidel

Civil Europe

Civil Austria



CHRISTIANA WEIDEL: CIVIL EUROPE – CIVIL AUSTRIA

© Christiana Weidel, 2008
© The World of NGOs, 2008

Translation by Mirko Wittwar

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purposes in any form or by any means without the permission of the publishers. Parts of this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes so long as the authors and publishers are duly acknowledged.

This book is published in the framework of the „EU Civis: Civil Europe – Civil Hungary – Civil Austria – Civil Romania” project.

Project partners:

European House, Hungary (project coordinator)
www.europeanhouse.hu

The World of NGOs, Austria
www.ngo.at

Pro Democracy Association, Romania
www.apd.ro

The project is supported by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission within the Community Programme „Europe for Citizens – Promote active European citizenship”.

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission.



ISBN 978-963-87909-1-0
Designed and Printed in Hungary

May 2008

Content

Roots of Austrian civil society	7
It started with reading circles and secret societies	7
Revolutions and reforms result in more democracy	8
Characterized by the multi-national state	9
Women consolidate civil society	9
Age of associations	10
Between the wars: new movements	11
Separate ways after 1945	11
The state's long shadow	12
Balance of interests by industrial relations	13
The Island of the Blessed?	14
“Westernization” results in new aspects.	15
Welfare state	16
The Big Three	17
Joining the EU: a new era of civil society	20
Thursdays Demonstrations and “Sanctions” by the EU.	21
New Post tariff triggers off protest by the cultural sector.	22
Social economy – the “stepchild” of Austrian civil society	23
Voluntary work	24
Structure and extent of voluntary work in Austria	24
2001, the International Year of Voluntary Commitment	25
Special status of the Church: between state and civil society.	26
Civil society today	28
Law of association	28
Is there a list of NGOs in Austria?	29
Is there any tax reduction for civil society?	30
Donation behaviour in Austria	30
Access to civil society?	32
Eurobarometre: the population's attitude towards the EU.	33
Challenges and Prospects of Austrian Civil Society	34
SWOT Analysis: Civil society in Austria	35
What must be done?	37
What can be done by civil society?	37
Voices of civil society	38
Milestones of Austrian civil society.	41
Civil society organisations, overview	43
Glossary	50

Foreword

Dear Reader, you are holding in your hands the end product of a Hungarian-Austrian-Romanian joint venture, in three volumes.

The organisations involved in the EUCivis: Civil Europe – Civil Hungary – Civil Austria – Civil Romania project have undertaken to present the situation of the civil society in their country, and also attempt to assess the challenges faced by the sector and outline the directions of progress and the possible answers.

In short, this book is about the past, present and future of the civil society of three countries of the region. Taking into consideration the lessons of the common past, we must keep in mind that we can only prosper if we search for answers to the questions of common concern in co-operation, by upholding our common values and not to the cost of each other.

We profess with conviction: in this seemingly complicated world the European Union provides appropriate frameworks to supplying the answers.

In this process the civil society organisations play an unavoidable role, one that cannot be substituted with anything. Their characteristic features, i.e. their independence, sensitivity towards social issues, resourcefulness, flexibility, openness, co-operative spirits make them eminently suitable to become an integral factor.

We trust that these three volumes will not simply gather dust on the bookshelves but will serve as a helpful aid for researchers, politicians, public administration officers, teachers, journalists, students and naturally the representatives of the civil society organisations – in short, for many people.

Besides the authors and the contributors, we also wish to thank the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Union for having helped the implementation of our project in the framework of the „Europe for Citizens” Programme 2007 – 2013.

On behalf of the three civil organisations implementing the programme, we wish you happy reading.

Barabás Miklós
European House
Hungary

Christiana Weidel
The World of NGOs
Austria

Cristian Pirvulescu
Asociatia Pro Democratia
Romania

Budapest – Vienna – Bucharest, May 2008

Joining the European Union in the year 1996 has changed Austria's civil society deeper and more lastingly than many people are aware of. In contrast to Germany, which counts among the EU founding states, after the Second World War Austria decided for the path of neutrality. Joining the EU brought Austria's civil society back to the community of European actors.

With the fall of the “iron curtain” and the EU's extension towards Eastern Europe, Austria's common roots with the former countries of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy were reinforced. For her common history with Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and other nations had left marks, not only by influencing regional cooking – but also dealing with the interests of groups in the former multi-national state had effects on civil society.

Furthermore, in Austria there is the influence of a number of international organisations which are located in Vienna, being one of the United Nation's four main seats. Even if the majority of the population hardly perceives these UN-accredited organisations, they are nevertheless one important aspect of the environment of civil society.

The following view at the history of civil society and the depiction of the current situation is done from the point of view of civil society actors, while tracing Austria's particularities: the model of industrial relations as a means of balancing social interests, the after-effects of multi-national relationships within the multi-national state, the awakening of civil society triggered off by “Hainburg”, the Sea of Light against racism, the Danube Conferences, and “sektor3/kultur”, as far as to positioning the country as a small but important European hinge between East and West.

Roots of Austrian civil society

Historically, the development of Austrian civil society shows four periods in the course of which it was lastingly shaped:

1. **During the period of enlightenment** in the 18th/19th centuries, like-minded people increasingly cooperate by private organisations which act publicly and are meant to contribute to the society's welfare; the "civil society" is being organised.
2. **In the shadow of the growing welfare state** after the two world wars associations experience considerable change. They make the civil society develop to the full in social respects, but make it highly dependent on the state.
3. **The Cold War leaves its marks:** the UNO enters the stage – with it, international organisations arrive at Vienna; universities deal with first single aspects of the topic; "The Big Three" establish themselves: the organisations of environmental, development, and social policies.'
4. Finally, Austria **joining the EU** results in another step of development: new prevailing conditions, support programmes, and co-operations change structures, demand co-operation, and make new actions possible. The EU's recent eastern extensions create a new awareness of the possibilities of contributing to European civil society.

It started with reading circles and secret societies

In Austria – just as in most European countries – the history of civil society started with the period of enlightenment which was at its peak in the 18th and 19th centuries. This period was characterized by the opinion that by way of reason people might be guided towards better behaviour. One intended to oblige people to contribute to the general welfare both as individuals and as a community.

The rise of printing and the Declaration of Human and Civil Rights in France, declared in 1789, resulted in new ideas being announced all over Europe. Reading societies and debating clubs "on educating the individual towards the welfare of society" were founded. By reading aloud current literature these societies also included people who did not know how to read and which had previously been alien to ideational assemblies. This way they opened up a catchment area for civil society going beyond the educated classes of nobility, middle class, and public officials, for many groups of the Austrian population had not yet been reached by literacy campaigns, and thus they had been excluded from contemporary European education processes. About 80 % of the country was dominated by rural structures. Farmers had hardly any access to the public discourse or any possibilities of exerting influence on the powerful. Committed people were able to acquire reading and writing skills by help of the Church, but due to harsh economic conditions and many farmers being serfs they stayed a minority. After the "liberation of peasants" and abandonment of serfdom politics made some efforts to gain more influence on peasants who up to then had been mostly under Church influence;

however abandonment of serfdom was by far not enough to make the harsh living conditions for the rural population disappear, daily life worlds were too much different, mutual expectations too high. There remained tensions between the different groups which still today can be felt by the cultures of societies and mutual attributions to city and country.

Thus, the reading circles of the period of enlightenment may be considered predecessors of organised civil society. Indeed, humanist associations and literature circles had been socially active even earlier, but often they had acted only secretly and also were not accessible to everybody interested. One essential feature of organised civil society, however, is the declaration of being public and the basic openness of joining. But a concentration of power outside the ruling institutions was much feared in the monarchy, even more if celebrities from politics and culture contributed to such associations. Accordingly, for example the association of “Freemasons”, a European doctrine of thinking, was still banned in Austria for a long time when in other countries it counted among welfare associations and e. g. ran recognized hospitals in the USA.

Apart from reading societies, also economic associations were important for society, which strived for improving trade and industry. They supported those owning enterprises, factories, and crafts businesses.

Already in the period of enlightenment many of these organisations were committed with intercultural and international communication. Thus they founded a civil society which beyond Austria's borders communicated with groups in other countries, even if it did not recognize itself as a civil society or use this name.

Revolutions and reforms result in more democracy

In Europe, the period of revolutions and reforms at about 1848 resulted in abrupt political change. Step by step there was an improvement of the situation of society. The centre of the Austrian revolutionary movement was in Vienna, more than 4,000 people died while attempting to achieve a more democratic situation (Nautz 2008). Even if the revolution in the stricter sense was a failure, the political structures became more democratic. There had to be a reaction to problems, new structures dissolved absolutist rule. Also the predominance of the Church was shaken. The enlightenment resulted in shifting attention “from God towards man”, the revolutions brought concepts of human and civil rights.

Functioning networks of citizens were formed, which further developed the new ideas and attempts at freedom. These networks supported each other, by exchanging knowledge, information, and sometimes even money, they reached as far as to North and South America which were connected to Europe by colonial relationships. The debate on civil society in these regions communicated new aspects to Old Europe, such as organisations in South America emphasizing the significance of the rural population for the development of society.

Austria's monarchy experienced revolutionary troubles in several regions, national movements for autonomy, most of all at the country's borders (Nautz 2008, p. 79). There were

demands for more rights of individuals and groups, there was looking for new kinds of public, for more direct political participation. In retrospect, this period of revolutions must be considered an important movement towards civil society, in the course of which essential topics such as basic rights and the freedom of media were discussed and demanded.

Characterized by the multi-national state

In the monarchy there was a variety of societal realities. It included 11 nationalities and about 14 different languages, which was a considerable challenge for the administration. Linguistic and cultural heterogeneity determined the way of dealing with civil society and its organisations. Austria was not a people but many small peoples. Both then and in later times mechanisms had to be found which would possibly satisfy all participants and would nevertheless keep them in check. This way a balanced system was created which, however, did not allow for too much freedom, and which still today becomes obvious by Austrian politics and its “principle of giving everybody an equal share” towards organisations. It gives everybody who bows to the powerful, but not too much to anybody, in order of not endangering power.

Women consolidate civil society

Early civil society was consolidated by the women’s emancipation movement. Women demanded participation in political decision-making and more participation in society, both for themselves and for others. Although in those days women had only few political rights (the introduction of suffrage for women came as late as with the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy and the establishment of a republic after the First World War in 1918), women from all classes took part in the revolutionary movement and for example by way of reading societies were able to conquer important leeway for public participation.

However, the gender-related attribution of private and public resulted in considerable consequences for perceiving civil society activities in the context of history. The retrospective view of male-dominated history mostly only perceives the formal organisational structures of males, but not informally working groups founded or decisively influenced by women. Thus, the history of civil society in Austria stays to be mostly male, the voice of women was hardly listened to. Contributions by feminist theorists on the debate on civil society are still today consequently ignored or drowned, although it would be very important to include the gender point of view to understand “... *who* against the background of a still intact gender-specific distribution of work and roles is and can be socially active *in which way*.” (Pauer-Studer 2003, p. 78)

By way of reading circles and welfare organisations women laid one of the foundations of a female culture of societies which may be called integrative, caritative, and based on topical

interests. It contrasts Austria's male culture of societies which is orientated at keeping the power and resulted in exclusion, which became manifest towards the outside by fixed places and inside by informal alliances. Women's associations could become active everywhere where there was need for action and enough room, they had hardly a name of their own, no fixed seat or always a different one; male alliances, on the other hand, had their (secret) rituals and always the same pubs as meeting places, they became manifest by their names, which even increased the coherence of the group, whereas women's societies stayed to be rather loosely connected and did not achieve any trans-personal network. Only with the number of working women increasing and with their political participation in the course of the 20th century also the culture of societies changed, the democratisation of society made new kinds of networks possible both for women and men.

Age of associations

The 19th century is considered the "age of associations" in Austria. As a concession to the middle classes, more liberal laws for economic associations were granted. In 1867, by Article No. 12 of the State's Basic Law, an act regulating clubs and associations was passed precisely for associations not meant for economic gain, for welfare, music, singing and coming together, fire brigades, shooting clubs and veterans, art and sciences, students and teachers associations, as well as political clubs – the predecessors of modern political parties.

The unsolved social questions resulted in an increasing number of workers associations, associations of political nature, which only later served also for cultural and sports purposes as well as coming together. Most of all savings clubs gained importance, by help of which the working population tried to provide for their own social security given the lack of public security. Apart from this there were welfare associations which were connected to the Church and whose "charitable" nature was mostly due to women from the middle classes and the nobility being committed there.

The act on regulating clubs and associations made legal existence possible for the already developed movements. For the time being, the founding of trade unions was banned. An organised movement of workers and educational associations, which had its peak by a mass demonstration in Vienna causing great sensation, achieved that from 1870 on also union activities were allowed. Nevertheless, often trade union assemblies were considered to be "a danger for the state" and banned, most of all it was bigger assemblies.

The spread of civil society in Austria in the 19th century is due to three factors: First, not only the businesses of the middle classes benefited from the economic rise but also their associations; art, sciences, social activities, guilds, private foundations, and schools were flourishing.

Second, at the same time many middle and working class people became increasingly aware of injustice and social inequality, and new groups developed which tried to achieve social improvement, for their own purposes or to bring relief to people in need.

Third, with the wave of economic globalisation at about the turn of the century also civil society grew more closely by forming trans-national networks and increasingly exchanged ideas.

The First World War brought an end to many of these approaches at international solidarity.

The end of the monarchy and the declaration of the First Republic in 1918 mobilized new powers of civil society, of authoritarian power structures, and of national desires.

Between the wars: new movements

Nevertheless, in the inter-war period civil society experienced cultural change: pacifist and internationalist groups extended the world view, supported by modern mass culture and technologic progress. Also in Austria there developed new political, social, and scientific movements which dealt intensively with problems of the world. Many later developments originate from this, for never before there had been so much awareness of problems and individual readiness for co-operation across national borders.

The Second World War again made an abrupt end to these efforts, many organisations were dissolved for good. The labour of reconstruction delayed the start of new powers of civil society, many fields were “rediscovered” as late as in the next century, for example human rights organisations seemed to be in a deep sleep.

As it is well known, after the Second World War there were different developments in Western and Eastern Europe.

Separate ways after 1945

The diverging ideologies which were the foundations of the political, economic, and social systems of the period of the Second World War contributed to shaping civil societies:

The West of Europe experienced the social revolution of the 1960s. Unsolved political and social problems were discussed and resulted in increasing democratic awareness and the will of increased democratic participation. There developed movements in the fields of environmental protection, development policy, human rights, rights of employees and women, anti-nuclear, pacifism, and consumer protection.

In the Communist countries of Eastern Europe the development of civil society was suppressed, although it lived on by its activities, often connected to risking one's own life. Since then, for Eastern Europeans the concept of civil society has been connected to ideas of dissidents, underground, and conspiracy, seeking for a way of debating which is independent of political parties and state and having to fight for the freedom of speech and assembly.

After the Second World War Austria's civil society was determined by three kinds of development: the invincible power of the political parties which had replaced the monarchy, enforcing industrial relations as a means of balancing interests, and joining the European Union. Let us have a closer look at these three aspects:

The state's long shadow

Daily life after the Second World War was ruled by the predominance of political parties. Proportional democracy in the political parties state of Austria provided changing participation in power and guaranteed protection of vested rights (Nautz 1998, p. 153). Political parties were represented everywhere: "With bureaucracy, at school, with banks and house building companies, with assurances and sports organisations, in short: almost everywhere." (Brix 1998, p. 135)

The population did not have a say with this. Neither in the context of the foreign powers' agreement on Austria's territory nor later when it was about joining the EU – "there was deciding about".

Neither the public media, which were financially dependent on support by the state, nor the sciences or the cultural scene, which both were still characterized by the influence of the occupying powers, provided any possibility of a public, critical discourse. Also the trade unions, which might have been able to enforce a stronger civil society, were dependent on the state's willingness to include them.

The high influence of the state and the population's belief in authority resulted in civil society being increasingly dependent on the two big parties. This became also obvious by the dense interwovenness of high staff positions. There were state representatives with the boards of associations, with the advisory councils of foundations, with supervisory institutions of banks. The dependency of association had its peak by the mentality of the "Christmas gift" of public funding: if by the end of the year the municipal budgets had not been com-

pletely spent, there was a generous donation to associations – in the fore was not the purpose of supporting but adjustment to the political system.

Funding was seen as a personal gesture by the parties holding power. Thus, every association had to attribute itself to one of the big parties, or it was attributed – once funded publicly, the association was once and for all connected to the respective political party.

Only the following generations achieved the insight that this kind of party book business resulted in deficits for democracy. Until then, associations either had a guaranteed living under one party or no chance at all to participate in public funding.

Balance of interests by industrial relations

The two world wars and their political and economic crises had sobered class struggle and the political parties' thinking by camps, they were ready to pull together. Occupation by foreign powers had essentially contributed to the camps moving closer to each other. Between associations and politics there developed a co-ordination of interests as a necessary agreement.

By founding a joint committee on debating urgent social political problems among the Vienna Chamber of Commerce and the Workers Chamber of Vienna the foundations for an "industrial relation" was laid which for a long time served as the real institution of mediating the interests of society.

The core of industrial relation was a model of agreement which was meant to reconcile ideologic differences and conflicts and served for reaching a consensus on economic and social issues outside parliament. Contributing were the Economic Chamber, the Federal Workers Chamber, the Conference of the Presidents of Agricultural Chambers, and the Trade Union Association. Being legal organisations under public law with legally defined membership, they represented interests at the level of the overall state – a specific feature of Austria which raised great attention.

After the occupying powers had left the country, during the 1960s and 1970s this way of co-operating was further developed towards being an independent instrument. It was not only restricted to work relations between employers and employees but included ever more topics and legislative procedures.

By striving for parity, interests were often polarized (employers vs. employees) and contrasted to each other. These contrasts influenced on Austria's culture of associations and split it up into political camps where often emotions were boiling up. But at least the contrasting parties were round the table – and that is together with the state. This model of splitting up into party-political interests had quite an effect on civil society: on every issue there were always two associations which were funded by the state (by the respective party), to begin with associations of social care which soon were to establish

themselves as powerful opponents in the field of public health, via organisations for organising cultural events, as far as to the two big automobile associations which till today show the political colours of the Grand Coalition.

This splitting up had far-reaching consequences most of all for the educational system which was perfectly state-organised, forced decision-makers to own a party membership book, and left hardly any leeway for new groups of civil society. Projects in the fields of education and culture were only funded if there had been attribution to one of the two big parties and thus the resource had been investigated – which way every other group which felt belonging to another party or wanted to stay independent of party politics was automatically excluded from the structures of public funding and forced to look for private donations or unpaid honorary office. Still today this way of neglecting civil society matters outside the world of political parties appears with the culture of associations, it helped creating a differentiated system of associations in power-political fields but not any kind of independent civil society.

“The predominant pattern of Austrian society is the patronage association, which offers security and demands dependency. It draws its strength from collective historical experiences”, as it is stated by an analysis of the particularities of the history of Austrian civil society (Brix 1998, p. 121). In Austria, it says, it is not clear what “civil society” really is and most of all by whom it is represented.

The Island of the Blessed?

The institutionalized agreement process of industrial relations was considered an ideal means of supporting the economic rise and coined the quotation “Island of the Blessed”. Doubtlessly, Austria was an Island of the Blessed in those days, but not for everybody. For who had no public voice was not heard. The process of this kind of decision-making happened on the basis of party politics according to the principle of proportional representation, pre-parliamentarily and not publicly. From the mid-1980s on, when the disadvantages of party business became obvious, this was increasingly criticised as being undemocratic.

The Grand Coalition of the two big political camps, Volkspartei (People’s Party) and Social Democrats, had mostly excluded Communist, Green, and Liberal parties from the process of industrial relations and thus from representing the interests of society. The consensus process was able to prevent strike, which had positive effects on the economy. However, this way also many societal interests which did not immediately concern this relationship were ignored, such as party-politically independent cultural-, educational-, environmental-, and development-political intentions as well as cross-section issues of civil society.

“Westernization” results in new aspects

Austria being divided by the occupying powers and the “Cold War” between America and Russia had established structures of influence by great powers in the country. It was expressed by the “westernization” of economy or by a growing diplomatic network of relations in Eastern and Central Europe. It also infiltrated the autonomous scene of civil society which had stayed to be excluded and thus was thankful for every kind of help from the outside.

The invisible foreign influence had its effect, for example by awarding prizes for extraordinary service to committed actors of civil society or by supporting informative material, brochures, and the printing of the yearbooks of organisations. By way of this proceeding, which for the first time made it possible for some associations to appear publicly and resulted in a wave of new foundations, both the direction of the contents e. g. of the Austrian cultural and film industry was – and still is – co-controlled and lasting loyalty of important people to the “donating countries” was created.

At this time there was hardly any kind of topically independent civil society, although the establishment of international organisations connected to the United Nations, which had chosen Vienna as their fourth headquarters, would have made extended networking with organisations possible. Still today, from the European office of the Club of Rome via the Conference of NGOs (CONGO), as far as to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), many important and less important players and opponents of civil society play a role there.

Also funding by private donators was mostly lacking, which among others was due to the development of the system of foundations which in Austria was different from neighbouring countries. Until 1993 hardly any private foundation was newly founded. The Act on Private Foundations from 1993 aimed at bringing foreign capital to Austria and to keep Austrian capital in the country, for in the context of handing over property the high tax burden had resulted in much capital moving to other countries, e. g. to Liechtenstein and Switzerland.. The Act on Private Foundations was not meant to support non-profit activities in Austria, it only served for the profitable investment of capital and its tax-saving administration but not for social, cultural, education- or health-related tasks, as for them the state was “in charge”, and a change of the system of associations was the issue. Thus, today there are already about 3,000 private foundations, in most cases organised as tax-saving financial resources of families, banks, or companies, but less than 10 % are at least partly charitable, whereas in Germany of the ca. 15,000 private foundations almost 90 % are charitable..

This means that in Austria there is hardly any “alternative capital” at hand for civil society, although in the year 2000 the total amount of capital owned by Austrian private foundations was estimated to be double as much than the total amount of capital owned by private foundations in Germany (Harauer 2000).

The judgement on Austrian civil society in the 20th century? By the words of Emil Brix, editor of the publication series “Civil Society”: too weak, no assertiveness, overlooked but integrated: the green protest coordinated by the new party, the Green Party, protest against party rule is occupied by right-wing populists, civil society is carried out by the trade unions: monopolizing according to Josephine tradition, state and political parties do care – from top-down (Brix 1998, p. 122).

Welfare state

The economic growth during the post-war decades made it possible for Austria to reorganise social conditions. The “welfare state” was supposed to support and secure the cohesion of society. Social benefits were supposed to support the individual’s position with competition, broad access to financial benefits and social services improved the way of living and was thus also meant to prevent criminality. Full employment, security during old age, care for children and people in need of nursing, equal rights of the sexes and access to education were the goals.

As far as into the 1970s the Austrian welfare state experienced constant expansion. At this time most of all social associations developed further, which established in the “non-profit” field and did not understand themselves as civil society in the political sense. They became social enterprises with continuous services contracts, considered themselves an essential economic factor with hundreds of employees, and felt being untouchable. They did not allow for any competitors in their sector, an attitude which may explain why the networking behaviour of Austrian civil society is so degenerated.

From the 1980s on, first changes were observed: in the mainstream of Europe the extension and range of social policy were reduced, and the priority of national full employment was replaced by international competitiveness.

Continuously, industrial relations lost their inner-state significance after the inclusion of other political parties. Economic change in the global context and societal change dissolved the power of the agreement-political construction, which resulted in other civil society powers gradually becoming stronger in Austria. A process which became obvious only in retrospect but was hardly accompanied by the sciences.

For the concept of civil society got increasingly into the focus of national interest, however it was only scarcely discussed by sciences and research in Austria. Rather, politics were ready to occupy it and to name it from different angles; what raised attention in this context was the concept of „Bürgergesellschaft“ (citizens’ society) as characterized by the conservatives. “The citizens” were to be in the focus of interest – fulfilling their duties in order of relieving the state.

The term “citizens’ society” was not able to push through. Civil society is not tied to one class, thus the concept of citizens’ society is not suitable as a counterpart of “civil society”, it can always be only a politics-occupied sub-concept. Given their difficulties with finding any other term, many Austrians took refuge with consequently using the English term “civil society”, which way, however, they were not able to reach those feeling uncomfortable with the English language.

The Big Three

Before joining the EU, Austria’s civil society had most strongly established in three sectors: environment, development co-operation, and social aid. At the European level, it is always human rights organisations to count among the Big Three, in Austria this function was taken over by the strong social sector. This was even more telling, as even later that environment of human rights organisations within civil society was missing for a long time, it was included into universities, and there it was rather restricted to observation than to action, or it was completely unpaid and dependent on honorary work. Also corruption was not an issue to be denounced by associations, for in the party state influencing on authorities was mutually organised, so that for a long time it was not perceived as being undemocratic. Still today the population is not sure about how much corruption exists with Austria’s politics and administration.

Social aid services

Immediately after the Second World War associations of charitable welfare were founded to alleviate post-war poverty. Although called charitable and unpolitical, they were subject to party rule just as daily newspapers, educational institutions, or automobile associations. Their topical catchment area became ever wider, from supporting charitable projects of establishing orphanages and caring for returning veterans as far as to contracting for caring for old aged at homes for senior citizens, caring for adults, ill people, caring for the relatives of imprisoned people, scholarships, medical service, legal advice, refugee relief at the national level, and help for foreign countries in case of catastrophes.

Welfare associations became modern services enterprises claiming a charitable nature, and with thousands of employees their size made them self-confident – may be too much self-confident, for they did not accept any competitors who, for example, came from the alternative scene without owning a party membership book. Still today, in this branch it is difficult for new associations to make contact to the big aid organisations, even if the latter's attitude has meanwhile changed and in the context of single issues makes also networking with other big institutions possible.

Development co-operation

During the 1960s there was a rise for organisations of private development aid, when the economic growth increased the population's income per head this was also formulated as a goal for the so called underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia. In the course of this the original concept of development as developing one's own strong points and abilities changed towards being an economic concept.

The appearance of the United Nations and its branches in Vienna, being one of the four headquarters, made the scene stronger. Suddenly there appeared international organisations and settled down in the environment of the UN. They opened up new prospects for civil society which, however, were only taken up by organisations of development co-operation (DCO), maybe because the frequent language was English, which many Austrians subconsciously still felt to be the language of occupation and which thus was not to push through as fast as in other countries.

Due to being internationally networked, the activities of non-governmental DCO institutions had quite a considerable influence on the government's beginning policy of development aid. In 1988, with the foundation of a Platform "Working-Group Development Aid Co-operation", the relationship between private and public work was increased – the AGEZ, being a platform of ca. 30 development-political NGOs, represented these organisations' political issues towards the public and the government. It was exclusively funded by membership subscriptions, so that it was able to stay independent for a long time. At an early stage the Platform established relations to other European holding organisations and for a long time was considered the strongest representative of civil society in Austria.

After twenty years of successful work, on March 31st, 2008, the AGEZ transferred its issues to a new NGO holding association by the name of "Global Responsibility – Working Group for Development and Humanitarian Aid" and thus follows a new course.

Environment

Two referenda, on the nuclear reactor at Zwentendorf in 1978 and on closing down the planned Danube power station at Hainburg in 1984, proved to be milestones of the envi-

ronment movement. Still today, the names of these two places are synonyms of protesting against the rule of the state and for the awakening of a new Austrian civil society.

“Zwentendorf”: despite a several million Shillings (the Austrian currency at that time) propaganda campaign, more than 50 % of the population voted against the so called peaceful use of nuclear power, thousands of people across all political parties, the rural population, intellectuals, artists, students took part in demonstrations – an impressing experience which for the first time communicated cross-party solidarity for an issue.

“Hainburg”: in December, 1984, the public political struggle on a planned Danube power station at Hainburg was decided in favour of the environment movement and against the interests of building and energy businesses and the national economy. Previously unknown resistance by the civil society had developed against this project. An “Animal’s Press Conference” (representatives appeared disguised as animals) announced a poll, there was the occupation of the meadow area, and there were confrontations between the police and 2,000 meadow occupiers, in the course of which 19 people were injured and 48 were arrested. Thousands of environment protectors celebrated Christmas on the meadow and had a feeling of the power of a movement. The referendum on calling the power station off, which also included the establishment of a nature reserve, was signed by more than 350,000 people – a breakthrough of civil society.

From these two cross-party protest movements there developed a number of environment organisations and holding associations in the course of the 1980s, as well as a new political party: The Green Party.

By the participation of civil society, by including foreign countries, and the participation of press representatives, “Hainburg” became a symbol of civil disobedience beyond the actual issue and a memory of successful resistance against deficits of democracy in Austria.

Another highlight of civil society was achieved by human rights organisations which previously had had only little success in Austria. In 1993 the Freiheitliche Partei (The Liberal Party)¹ initiated a referendum against foreigners which was signed by more than 400,000 people. 300,000 people in Vienna alone demonstrated by a Sea of Light, organised by the NGO “SOS Mitmensch”, for the time being the biggest demonstration during the Second Republic.

1. Translator’s remark: originally, the Freiheitliche Partei counted among Europe’s traditional liberal parties, somewhat to be compared to Britain’s Whigs. During the 1990s, however, it was so to speak took over by a doubtful politician, Jörg Haider, who, himself being a millionaire, completely changed the party’s political direction towards right-wing extremism.

Joining the EU: a new era of civil society

In 1996 Austria joined the European Union and thus fundamentally changed the situation of civil society. By taking part in funding programmes, those powers of civil society were enabled to become active which previously had been excluded from party funding according to proportional representation or had not taken part in it.

This was particularly true for human rights organisations and migration associations which did not live an easy life in “Fortress Europe”. Those associations pursuing unpolitical issues and being committed e. g. with football or culture did not have any problems to establish themselves in the environment of associations, they received smaller grants for their events and led a comparably peaceful life, most of all in the federal states. Those associations, however, which were committed with social-political questions, were ignored, however by way of considerable commitment and their member’s contributions they were able to survive, or when striving for receiving scarce public funding they had to look for a direction which was not occupied by the political parties’ big associations.

By way of the EU, participation models for migration associations came to Austria which opened up co-operation with authorities, for the respective programmes demanded partnerships, NGO contribution, and participation of people concerned. Many organisations were able to use this opportunity for their further development and for building up capacities, others died again with the punctual stream of money coming to an end. But the scene had changed, had become more permeable, and made it possible for committed people to act in a different way.

Cross-section issues

Now also cross-section issues were increasingly taken up. Previous to joining the EU, due to being aware of the need for change, new institutions had been founded, which worked cross-sectorally and also built up relationships to each other, such as the Fundraising Association, the NPO Research Institute, Association of Non-Profit Making Societies, also The World of NGOs was founded one year previous to Austria joining the EU. Nobody was in charge of state-funding their cross-sector issues, thus these organisations mostly stayed to be politically independent, which was topically useful for their work. They were financed by membership subscriptions or received EU funding, thus they were suspiciously viewed at by traditional associations.

At this time, the “Austrian Research Association” took over an important function by founding a working group “Ways to Civil Society in Austria”. It intended to stimulate the sciences and the field of practical work, in order of asking the question of how a civil society could and should be organised in Austria. Interdisciplinary research on the situation of civil society in Austria was supported and a number of publications was issued, historically dealing with the

topic of civil society in Austria. For a long time this stayed to be the only scientific way of discussing civil society in Austria, for most other publications were restricted to describing the non-profit sector and its effect on employment, or to the sector of non-profit economy which dealt with the work of non-profit institutions of the state.

What was still out of consideration was the topic of social economy, civil society's alternative kind of economy in contrast to profit-oriented economy – hardly anybody dealt with the rising terminology of civil society in Europe, and ignorance of this development was appropriately great, until the EU's EQUAL programme by establishing a column on social economy opened up the possibility of debating and research.

Before this, however, there happened a big event which caused great sensation among the Austrian scene of associations and started "sleepy" civil society moving:

Thursdays Demonstrations and "Sanctions" by the EU

In the year 2000 the Freiheitliche Partei participated in government for the first time, a right-wing populist, national conservative group, then the second-strongest political party in the country, after the Social Democrats. Suddenly the Volkspartei was only the third-strongest group. It formed a coalition government together with the Freiheitliche, which caused severe protest in the country and abroad. The Social Democrats activated their inner-association forces, which were followed by many civil society movements, and took to public protest. There was also foreign political protest, by a declaration the 14 EU partner states spoke out against the Volkspartei/Freiheitliche government coalition. In their opinion, this way a right-wing extremist party became part of the government, there was the threat of setting an example against this.

Protest by the population against the Freiheitliche becoming part of the government became manifest by the so called Thursdays Demonstrations, for more than two years activists expressed their protest by "taking a walk" together through Vienna, between 150,000 (according to statements by the police) and 250,000 (estimations by the organisers).

With the "black-blue" (the colours of the respective parties) government being sworn in, the threatened diplomatic, bilateral steps towards the government parties became valid, diplomatic relations were frozen in, there was no support for Austrian candidates running for positions with international organisations, in EU capitals ambassadors were only received at the technical level.

However, the 14 states did not reject Austria's membership subscriptions to the EU budget of about € 1 billion net worth every year.

Indirectly, European institutions took part in isolating Austria in Europe, for also they called off official visits, made no statements, and were reluctant in case of requests from Austria, although the sanctions had not been announced by the EU itself but by the EU member states.

Finally, a “council of three wise men”, consisting of politicians from Finland, Germany, and Spain was sent to find out about the effects on democracy of the *Freiheitliche* participating in government. Apart from members of government, also NGO representatives were questioned about their situation.

Finally in his report the council of wise men suggested lifting the sanctions, and the rejecting steps against Austria came to an end.

This isolation had severely struck Austria’s just growing civil society. Although officially EU work had been progressing as usual, many people also outside diplomatic relations followed the example of the sanction bearers. Discussed funding agreements were frozen in, attempts at partnership were broken up, schools refused exchange with Austrian students, during a students parliament in Strasbourg the Austrian participants were given the names of racists and National Socialists, intended visits by representatives of European institutions were called off. Due to this, civil society organisations suffered from financial and immaterial loss.

Again, the environment of civil society changed due to outside effects: for cancelled funding at the European level was replaced by national and regional authorities who felt to be also responsible for the situation and feared for their image with Austria’s public. This spontaneous and punctual support ignored previous funding traditions and thus created a new and interesting kind of relationship between state and civil society organisations.

Thus, the events around the country joining the EU influenced on the development of civil society by a mutual relationship between NGOs and state which still today shows effect, there developed a network of personal relations into which now also actors from the alternative or autonomous scenes were included.

New post tariff triggers off protest by the cultural sector

The conference on “civil society in the cultural sector” happened exactly during the transition period from the euphoria of the huge demonstrations and the repressive push of the new powers. Most of all the cultural scene suffered from severe financial loss due to cancelling the previously cheaper post tariff for printings of associations. Scourful metaphors by politicians, such as that of the hand which you don’t bite when it feeds, went through the media and threw not only the cultural scene into a turmoil. Solidar-

ity among associations rose, for although repression by the state was directed against cultural initiatives, because in the previous years they had been receiving extended funding from the rulers, it was clear for everybody that this behaviour might also be extended to other sectors.

Thus, the rush to the “sector3” conference was not only from the cultural scene. The invitation addressed many associations: “Some hundred thousands on the Heldenplatz against right-wing extremism. Doubtlessly motivating, but this is far from making civil society. Civil society begins with structures, with organising them and networking some thousand unconnected units.”

After all, apart from the state’s representative culture and the cultural industry, it was said, there must also be other units which – in connection to other fields of civil society – might be able to take the monopoly on the political away from the state, such as small, local cultural associations, socio-cultural centres, free theatre groups, free radio stations, and initiatives of the network culture.

The cultural scene became aware that there is no need to rigorously cutting down subsidies to restrict a civil society which had become dependent on the state but that it is the state’s general conditions which create a supportive or obstructive frame for the sphere of civil society.

“Sector3” became the slogan of the fight for increasing the political significance of private, independent cultural initiatives. An essential role with this played the “independent radio stations” which fought for their survival against the monopolising state broadcasting stations and which, with Austria joining the EU, had a new chance of continuing their activities. Their most beautiful success was in 2008, in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue: the network of independent radio stations was the only networking project in Austria to be supported by the EU in the frame of this programme.

Social economy – the “stepchild” of Austrian civil society

In Austria there is no tradition of the concept of social economy. It means the alternative way of doing business of private organisations such as associations, cooperatives, mutual societies, and foundations of economic or market-oriented activities which, however, pursue first of all social objectives such as the fight against social exclusion. Austria’s idea of the state as the keeper of social order used to have little understanding for this, and only the EU’s EQUAL programme has opened up new prospects also in Austria and has created a small number of associations being interested in social economy.

Voluntary work

Almost one half on Austria's population over 15 does voluntary work.

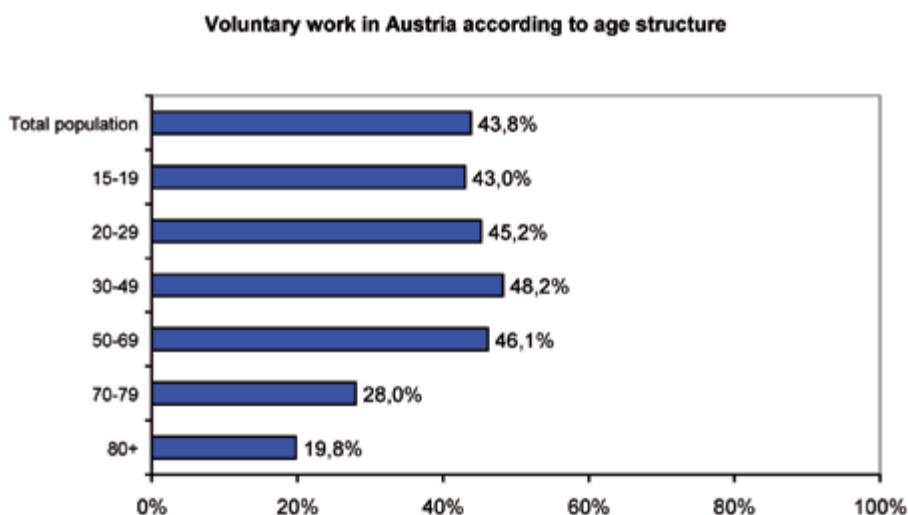
This commitment is of great significance, for economic reasons it is indispensable, it increases the quality of life and social cohesion. The range of commitment reaches from neighbourhood initiatives via social and health services, sports and culture as far as to disaster control and rescue services. There is distinguishing formal from informal voluntary work, in order of separating activities happening in the context of an organisation, an association, or an institution from purely private services: among "informal voluntary work" without any institutional context activities such as help with homework, neighbourhood initiatives, caring for children, or gardening are counted.

Source: www.bmsk.gv.at

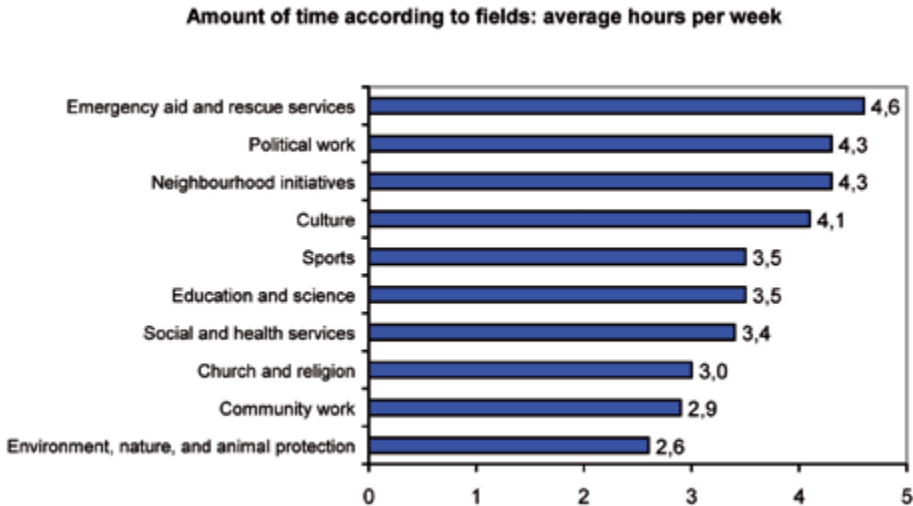
Structure and extent of voluntary work in Austria

Source: Statistik Österreich, survey 4th quarter 2006

43.8 % of Austria's population over 15 do some kind of voluntary work, that is 3.02 millions of Austrians. Among men the share is 47.1 %, and among women it is 40.7 %. At the top of all federal states there is Upper Austria (49 %), ahead of Tyrol (48 %) as well as Lower Austria and Vorarlberg (47 % each). With only 35 % Vienna brings up the rear.



On the whole, the above mentioned people did 18.029.710 hours of voluntary work. Correspondingly, voluntary work makes 13 % of the work total of all persons in work per week and 16 % of gainfully employed.



2001, the International Year of Voluntary Commitment

The year 2001, the International Year of Volunteers, played an essential role. It brought the demands by the voluntary sector into the focus of interest and made discussion possible. The significance of voluntary commitment with society was made visible, the shadowy existence of honorary work was brought to an end, and the government was encouraged to improve the structural prevailing conditions for voluntary activities.

Since 2001 there has been a number of activities supported by the government: an “Austrian National Committee” with eight working groups of experts was established, in 2002 there was a symposium in the parliament, and a “volunteers manifest” of seven fields of action with demands to politics, business, and society was presented:

Voluntariness needs: acceptance, training, legal foundations, co-operation, platforms, support, and publicity

The nomination of speakers on volunteer matters by the factions represented in the parliament was a clear sign that in future voluntary work as a societal issue will have to be taken more strongly into consideration.

With the establishment of the Austrian Council on Voluntary Work in 2003 one of the main demands was met. The council must advise the federal ministry in charge, it serves as an institution of representation and as a networking platform, it is supposed to clear away barriers which might be in the way of voluntary commitment, to develop measures, and to meet at least once a year. To support also the future commitment of as much people as possible, in the context of its volunteers policy the ministry supports further prevailing conditions such as offers of further training and its own “volunteers homepage” in the Internet.

Furthermore, a “certificate of voluntary work in Austria” was developed as a part of a volunteer’s ID. To make volunteers able to benefit from their acquired skills also in professional life, their achievements are documented, the certificate is supported by the labour service and Business Chamber.

Furthermore, by the “Voluntary Year of Social Work” a chance for young people over 18 has been established to learn more about work in the social field, in order of helping them to start health and nursing jobs. For this, the ministry in charge offers funding by way of extending family aid.

Austria takes also part in the European Voluntary Service, an action in the context of the EU’s “Youth in Action” programme. It makes it possible for young people between 18 and 30 to contribute to a non-profit project in a foreign country for the time of 6 – 12 months. For many young people this is an opportunity to make contact to the European world of associations. Apart from contact-making and reducing fear among young people, they acquire foreign language skills, and many of the graduates go on working in the field of Austrian NGOs which benefits from their cosmopolitan knowledge.

Special status of the Church: between state and civil society

Up to here, Church organisations have not been mentioned. In Austria, the Church has always have a special status, on the one hand it is itself a part of civil society, but due to its status as a public corporation it is also outside the Third Sector.

Churches, Nautz (2008) reminds us, have in most cases been allies of the powerful and the kings, this is particularly true for Austria, although also there the predominant influence of the Catholic Church declined after 1900.

For the Church, the modern state was a competitor in respect of taking sides with the poor and the weak, and it caused a loss of power which was balanced by co-operation. Christendom declared its solidarity with those being weak in society and demanded social justice from the state, that is it opposed the state, at the same time it put it in its place: “from the point of view of the Catholic social doctrine, the state must care for general welfare ... In this context the necessity of state intervention concludes among others from the subsidiarity prin-

ciple which obliges the state to social-politically interfere everywhere where single groups of society cannot do this themselves. But this pointing out to the subsidiarity principle already shows that the state must not seize the entire social initiative but that it may only help people to help themselves, without this way absorbing the social powers.” (Palaver, 2008)

The state, it says, may not be understood to be an all-determining social entity, it is an institution which completes society with its many groups and social structures.

There was a considerable contribution to this view by the only Pope – for the time being – coming from Eastern Europe, John Paul II., who decisively contributed to determining the direction of the Church as an opponent of the state being able to defend itself, and who included civil society groups more strongly.

In the mid-19th century the state constitution on the citizens’ general rights had determined the basis of individual and corporative freedom of worship, today Austria knows about 20 recognized religious communities.

During National Socialism the Church lost protection by the state, its fundings, its influence based on authority over marriage, and its large, extended system of associations which it had built up after the time of the monarchy and which it was only partly able to reactivate after the Second World War. The later coalition government and the general mood of industrial relation was useful also for the Church, the concordate which organises the Church’s legal position in the state was recognized by the government, the Church received recompensation payment for the capital which had been taken from it during the period of National Socialism. Only obligatory civil marriage was something which the state was not ready to give up on, instead it accommodated by taking over the staff costs for religious education.

In the course of the last national census 73.6 per cent of the Austrian residential population declared membership of the Catholic Church. Since the beginning of the 1970s both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches have recorded a constant loss of members, from 1971 to 2006 the Catholic Church lost almost one million believers. The Muslim community, on the other hand (in 1912 Austria was the first European state to recognize Islam as a religious community), has multiplied by fifteen in the same period and today has an estimated number of 400,000 members.

Apart from its pastoral activities, the Church today is active in the fields of education at school, in the field of organising hospitals, and of charitable care. It is very significant in the context of supporting asylum seekers, there both the Caritas as an aid organisation of the Catholic Church and the Diakonie as a social institution of the Protestant Church complete the state’s activities. The two organisations count among the biggest welfare institutions, about 10,000 fully employed staff members and 28,000 honorary workers are active for the Catholic Church e. g. with parishes and institutions of the Caritas.

For future problem solving, many actors set their hopes on the Church to support the fight against trafficking in human beings and racism, for in this respect particularly migrants from Eastern European countries rather trust in being helped by the Churches than by state institutions which appear monopoly-like.

Civil society today

According to the point of view, the Third Sector is often inexactly understood to be only a sub-field, particularly in Austria fluid boundaries must be seen as a particularity, for example the Church (with its public law status) and its system of associations or the associations of enterprises at the interface between market and civil society.

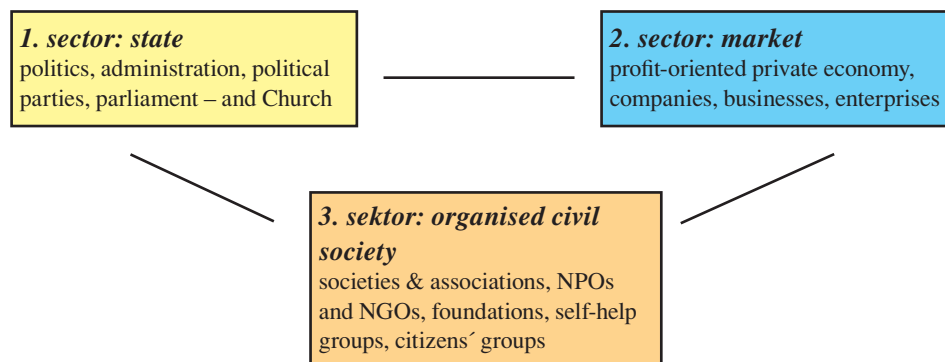


Fig.: Organisational forms in which society is organised

Both topically and in numbers, associations make the biggest share of civil society, currently there are more than 110,000 associations in Austria.

Law of association

The freedom of association is guaranteed by the Austrian constitution. According to Section 12 of the State's Constitution from 1867, to the Associations Act from 2002, and to Section 11 of the Human Rights Convention all people are entitled to form associations. An association is any kind of voluntary, long-term association of people intending to achieve a purpose by joint activity. Profit-oriented associations, co-operations, mutual societies, religious societies, and political parties are subject to special laws and not to the law of association. An association must be reported to the security board by presenting its statutes, this system of registering associations is generally considered very simple.

There is no particular partner authority for civil society, for NGOs or for organising co-operation with NGOs, only the registration authority for associations.

However, some ministries have developed special activities regarding associations:

- for association matters the Federal Ministry of the Interior is in charge, which has created its own associations homepage, “Vereinsportal”, which informs in detail about every question regarding associations.
- the Tax and Finance Ministry has edited an information brochure for associations which informs about taxes and charges aso.
- at the Federal Chancellory there is a department for sports and cultural associations

Furthermore, the departments of most ministries are experienced with cooperation with relevant NGOs, but only a few have created platforms or even Internet appearance particularly for them, e. g. environment and sustainability (www.partizipation.at); social matters (www.freiwilligenweb.at); health: on special issues such as violence aso.; for example furthermore the Social Services Ministry regularly publishes an extensive catalogue of social parent associations and their members.

Is there a list of NGOs in Austria?

There is no central index of NGOs (in many countries, most of all in Eastern Europe, there have been “NGO directories” already for a long time), but:

- there is a central index of associations which since recently is also accessible by the Internet if one knows the name or number of the respective association (zvr.bmi.gv.at).
- Vienna is one of the main seats of the United Nations, due to this there is an index of all international NGOs located with the UNO in Vienna which, however, does not give addresses but only names.
- the Vienna magistrate authority is provided with its own department for cooperation with NGOs and associations, located at the headquarters, for international relations, and publishes an overview of associations which, however, is not an index in the full sense of the word.
- also NGOs in the field of migration are well-handled by a special authority, the Österreichischer Integrationsfond - Fonds zur Integration von Flüchtlingen und Migranten (Austrian Integration Fund – Fund on Integrating Refugees and Migrants), founded in 1960 by the UN High Commissariate on Refugees and the Federal Ministry of the Interior as a refugees fund, since 2002 also in charge of migrants.
- Beyond the central associations register, association matters are organised at the level of the federal states, which means that at each federal government of the 9 federal states there is a contact partner for association matters which for the time being have dealt with their tasks in very different ways, e. g. some summarized relevant organisations for particular fields, such as self-help groups, every year and published a brochure or a catalogue, others are provided with a platform for social associations aso. Also in this field there is currently much change and development.

Is there any tax reduction for civil society?

Tax reduction is based on charitable nature which, however, for the time being is only organised by the Federal Order of Taxes. There is tax reduction only for about 300 associations, for scientific and Church associations. The procedure of being granted tax reduction is different for every federal state, and every year only single organisations are granted the status of being charitable.

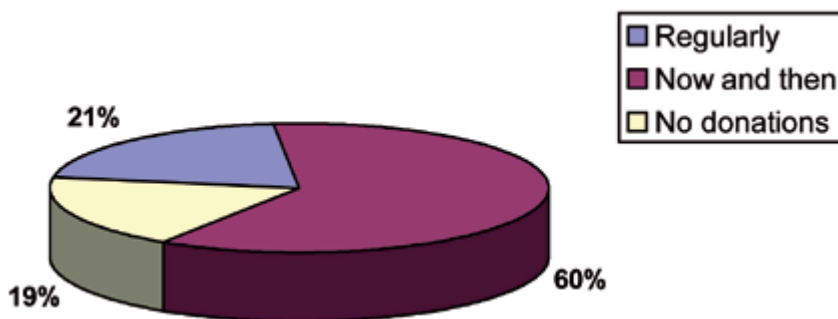
However, there are attempts at achieving tax reduction for donations, which for the time being is non-existent, since the introduction of the certificate of the quality of donations, which has been initiated by a group headed by the Interessenverband der gemeinnützigen Verbände Österreichs IÖGV (Association of Non-Profit Organisations in Austria) (www.iogv.at), there have been first successful steps.

Donation behaviour in Austria

(Source: Spendenbericht 2007, Österreichisches Institut für Spendenwesen)

In 2006 slightly more than 80 per cent of the population stated to have made a monetary donation at least once a year. For 2006 the amount was more than 400 million Euros.

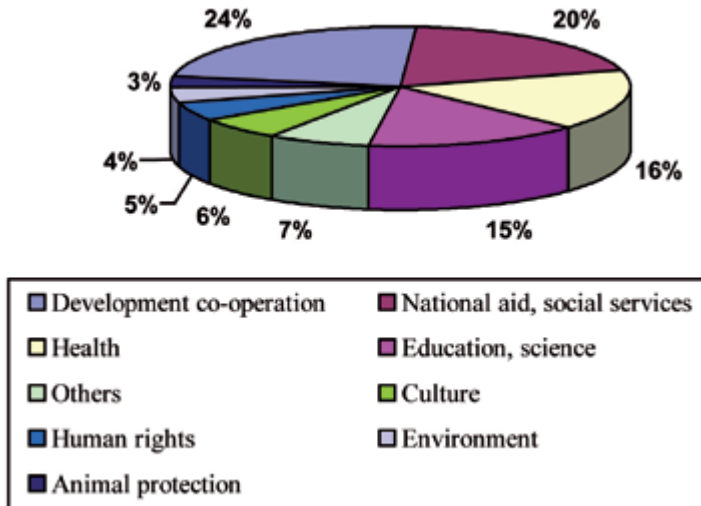
1. Monetary donations in 2006 in per cent, population older than 15



2. Austrian fundraising organisations according to sectors

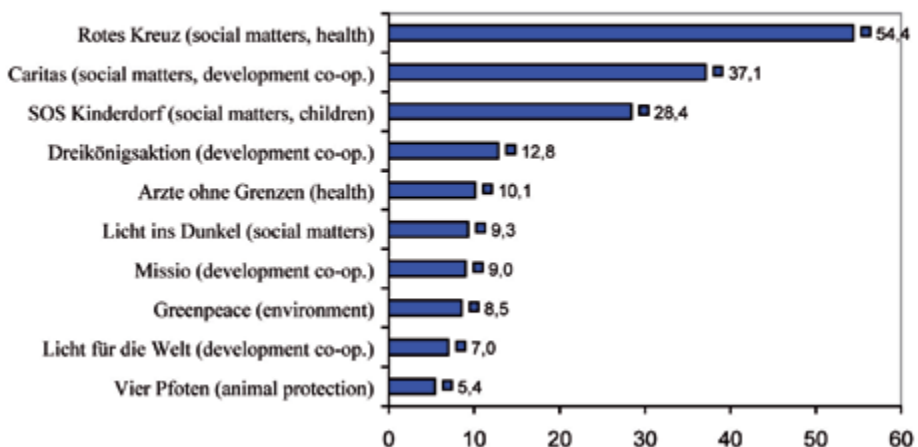
Source: ÖIS-Datenbank, October 2007

Some organisations are active in several sectors. “Others” includes unions of organisations whose purpose of fundraising was not clear.



3. The ten biggest fundraising organisations, in 2006

Amount of donations in million Euros



Access to civil society?

With Austria joining the EU, the relationship between state and civil society has been changed, which up to then had been based on the tradition of including single big organisations into the preparation of law-making on social issues. For the time being there have not been any fixed procedures or standards, in 2005 first recommendations were worked out by the “Life Ministry” on including NGOs in the context of increased participation of citizens. In the future they are supposed to be extended to become a catalogue of standards.

Access to civil society at the national level happens by many ways:

1. **Umbrella organisations** of sectorally structured associations, e. g. the Association of Austrian Educational Institutions or the European parent association of help for the homeless
2. **Networks and platforms** at the regional, national, or European or international level, e.g. Poverty Network Austria with its regional organisations or the platform of social organisations in Europe.
3. **Specially registered NGOs**, e. g. at the United Nations in Vienna or at the European Commission’s CONECCS database
4. Associations being listed according to **funding**, e. g. at the national level at the various departments or at the various funding programmes of the general directories of the European Commission
5. **Central contacts** on current problems, e. g. Ökoweb, asylum co-ordination
6. **Regional platforms**, OÖ Kulturplattform or research platforms
7. Organisations having **cross-sectional tasks**, e. g. The World of NGOs.

“Civil dialogue”, as communication and consultation of institutions with the organisations of civil society is called at the European level, happen in two ways in Austria.

1. “Top down”, by including big organisations into the working out of draft laws, but without a document like “contracts” or “memorandum of understanding”.
2. “Bottom up” by way of media-covered protests against extended projects triggering off public debating, such as Hainburg or Zwentendorf. Apart from these successful examples there have also been defeats of civil society protests, such as the abandonment of reduced post tariffs for association magazines or the long-years debate on the tax-deductibility of donations which resulted in the seal of quality for donations – together with labourious conditions – but still has not resulted in donations to associations to be tax-deductible.

An example of the top-down approach is the Ministry for the Environment’s “Walddialog”, (“forest dialogue”) which on the topic of how to develop a forest strategy includes more than 70 civil society organisations into a dialogue process, in order of formulating different interests and to have them contribute to the development of a national forest programme.

For this, special committees were established, a Round Table, where political and topical interests are balanced, expert modules on topical preparation, an Internet homepage to allow for the participation of the broad public, as well as public events where statements may be presented. Transparency in the course of the “Walddialog” is guaranteed by records, policy papers, and the publication of results on the Walddialog homepage.

Otherwise, however, it is mostly left to administrations and the governments of the federal states in how far they will include civil society organisations into their work, for associations matters are mostly organised at the level of federal states. However, politics and administration rather show a mentality of outsourcing certain tasks and not of consultation by way of systematically surveying among civil society.

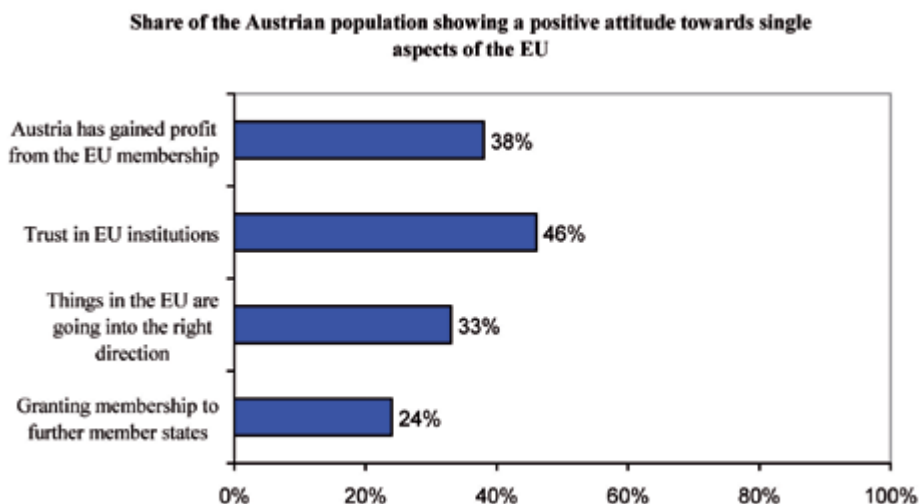
One exception to be praised is again the Ministry for Environment which by its own platform invites citizens and their organisations to participate, establishes its own virtual contact place and information platform in the Internet for this, and has drafted a catalogue which is supposed to make it easier for administration to consult civil society organisations.

The relationship of civil society organisations to the state is increasingly influenced by attitude, guidelines, and laws of the European Union. Today more than 60 % of national laws and guidelines come from the EU level, such as energy and environment policy, social policy, and support structures. Civil society organisations benefit from trans-national co-operation and “best practice” examples of how relations to the state might be organised. The exchange of ideas of common topics and the comparison of government steps provides insight into how funding, laws, and other regulations are dealt with in other countries.

To do justice to the variety of civil society, a number of possibilities of structured dialogue with the state or the community of EU states is necessary. In this context networks of cross-section interests at the trans-national level play an ever more important role; as they themselves are already cross-sectoral networks of civil society, they might be an ideal – as being grass-roots controlled – completion of legal instruments.

Eurobarometre: the population’s attitude towards the EU

Austria joining the EU in 1995 was due to a government decision, a referendum in 1994 resulted in 66% agreeing with this decision. In the course of the last 10 years after joining the attitude towards the EU has turned to the worse.



Source: Eurobarometre of the European Commission, National Report Austria 2007

Regarding the question of trust in the EU, Austria is with the pack, nevertheless excitement about being a member is constantly below average.

In April 2008 the Austrian parliament voted on the EU Reform Treaty, and the question was asked if a referendum was necessary. SPÖ, ÖVP, and The Green Party voted in favour of the EU Reform Treaty and against a referendum. They said that according to the constitution a referendum was not necessary and politically not desirable. Only the two liberal parties, FPÖ and BZÖ, demanded a referendum and voted against the EU Reform Treaty. They were the minority.

Challenges and Prospects of Austrian Civil Society

What is the situation of civil society in Austria? The SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) shows the challenges.

SWOT Analysis: Civil society in Austria

<i>strengths</i>	<i>weaknesses</i>
positive connotation of civil society	little knowledge of civil society among the population, hardly any research work
high density and variety of associations	no contact place for civil society with administration
much readiness for assemblies, common activities, distinctive culture of associations	much influence of political parties on the culture of associations, camp thinking
much readiness by the state to pay for social- and health-political tasks	high degree of dependency on the state and on public funding
good donation behaviour of the population	donations to associations are not generally tax-deductible
much readiness by the population to do voluntary work	bureaucratic public officials within outmoded structures
unrestricted possibility of free speech	hardly any funding for independent free media
imaginativeness of independent organisations	lack of alternative ways of funding, due to hardly existing private foundation capital
good co-operation of associations and authorities at the local level	high degree of the staffs of authorities being interwoven with association structures
well-developed sub-fields, such as development co-operation and a high degree of environmental awareness	hardly any funding of cross-section issues, very little knowledge of social economy
seats of the United Nations and many other organisations in Vienna	hardly any cohesion of organisations in the scene, low degree of networking
increasing readiness for citizens' groups	low degree of courage of one's conviction, high degree of believing in authority and subject mentality, being afraid of authorities
<i>opportunities</i>	<i>risks</i>
increasing perception of civil society development	overloading civil society with societal issues
increasing readiness for professionalisation	increasing bureaucracy in case of state funding

increasing offers of NGO training	indifference towards financial crises of smaller organisations
increasing inclusion of NGO issues and actors at schools	indifference towards processes of citizenship education
increasing support of educational processes of civil society	reduction of state funding
more critical public	improper use of donations, scandals in the context of fundraising organisations
increasing networking efforts in the sector	declining readiness for networking by organisations
rising number of private foundations of non-profit nature	no stimulations for private foundation capital of non-profit nature
increasing interest in working for NGOs	making experimental prevailing conditions more difficult in the Third Sector
people participating more actively in processes of political decision-making	increasing ignorance among public officials and preventing the inclusion of civil society
increasing interest in EU issues	increasing ignorance of EU issues
increasing interest in a European civil society	increasing indifference towards European developments

The weaknesses and chances of civil society become clearly obvious: too weak, not able to push through, ignored, that is what Emil Brix stated in 1998, since then there has been little change, his judgement must be confirmed. At the same time many actors do recognize chances of strengthening civil society: networking at the European level, an international point of view, Vienna being a nerve centre, and Austria being the gate to the East. The possibility of organisations to be included by authorities stays to be a critical factor, the acceptance of the expertise of NGOs, as well as preserving or achieving the highest-possible degree of independence of the state as a funding institution, which is strongly connected to the prevailing conditions for public funding.

What must be done?

Despite increasingly dealing with the topic of civil society, in Austria it is still about the struggle for the power to define and about clear definitions of terms:

Who decides what civil society is?

Who represents it, who takes care for it, who is a contact partner?

Who determines directions, who is obliged to support, who decides?

The well-known, typical Austrian question “Dürfen’s denn das? (Who allowed this?)” is unspokenly in the minds of public officials if it is about civil society actors contributing to the organisation of political fields. Participation by organisations such as NGOs and citizens’ groups is often dismissed as a formality, only a few exceptions really understand the power of civil society as a societal corrective previous to political decision-making. Brix concludes his contribution on the historic understanding of civil society by an ironic sentence which is valid still today: “Initiative of one’s own and public spirit are not revolutionary slogans, even if in the Austrian context they might sound as such.” (Brix 1998, p. 128)

What can be done by civil society?

At first the purposeful, extended networking of the sector seems to be an important cornerstone which should be based on shared resources, mutual information, and joint development of strategy. Then, there must be a change of understanding the function of organisations, away from understanding themselves to be someone receiving pittance who, being a subject, is thankful for being funded, towards being a self-confident political consultant partner focusing on core competences.

This sounds like utopia? May be. But further networking at the European level, regular communication, and many common projects should enable civil society to learn from each other and to be successful together.

Voices of civil society

IÖGV, Dieter Herrnegger

In my view, Austrian civil society, as an institution detached from traditional forms of social organisation like parties, churches or labour unions, really came to birth in the 1970ies and 1980ies with collective, public protest on health, security and environmental issues. The campaign against Austria's first atomic power station and the campaign against a new hydro power station colliding with a national park are the first examples. A second wave of political mobilisation of broad groups of Austrian society came with the accession of Austria to the then EG, now European Union in the 1990ies.

But first, let's make the term clear: I am critical of the notion of a civil society that indulges in a self-portrait of pure opposition, be it in Austria or any other country. Civil society, for me, per definition, is something rather blurred something that can not be regarded as and treated as a „body“, as one coherent, hierarchical, organised group. To me, civil society is another term for variety, pluralism, containing a myriad of parallel, even contradictory issues and causes, and something that stays clear of party politics. What is the common umbrella of this patchwork, however, is people who actively and self-autonomously engage in issues that are not represented well (or at all) in the ordinary course of the established Austrian political system, its prevailing interest and lobbying groups. People, who privately engage in the enhancement of issues of public benefit or in better representation of minority interests, are the core of what constitutes civil society to me.

I do not see grave differences between Austrian civil society and that in other countries. Our civil society tends to be similar to that of other Western, democratic and industrialised countries. The main difference between single forms of civil society within this context is whether a state is more of a welfare state which plays a key role in the provision of public welfare or a more liberal state where many of the public functions are “outsourced” (from the welfare state perspective) to the private sector. In general, Austrian civil society as a continental European example tends to be weaker and slower in growth than in countries where private initiative for the public benefit plays a strong role traditionally.

I see two key challenges. One is, obviously, the need to secure private financing of activities that are aimed at the public benefit. Civil society should not expect the state to continue with public budgets. In my view, civil society should not even strive for state financing as it clearly undermines its independence and credibility, not to speak of the limits of activities that are imposed by dependence on other's money. I am thus sceptical of the never-ending call for public financing of what is, essentially private activity. At the same time, of course, a modern state has to make sure that all regulatory and tax doors are open for civil society to build up private, independent financing from society and not the state. The second key issue is short and simple. Bureaucrats and politicians in Austria and Brussels, stay clear of any further attempts of regulation and bureaucracy for civil society and non profit organisations! There are, already, too many examples of useless regulation that only choke and hamper private initiative for the public good.

Dieter Herrnegger is a non-profit-organisation expert based in Austria. For nearly 10 years, he has been active in lobbying & advocacy work for the Non Profit sector, fundraising and Non Profit management.

ZARA, Katrin Wladasch

The Sea of Light of 1993 initiated a change of understanding the role of Austrian human rights organisations, away from being counsellors in case of violations of human rights towards being political actors. Since then this trend has been increased, a development which is among others most of all influenced by European politics and EUropean pressure towards including civil society. Slowly but steadily the recognition of NGOs as experts of concrete fields of politics by the European Commission, as it is the case e. g. in the field of anti-discrimination, has effect on the readiness to recognize in this respect also in Austria.

In the field of human rights everybody knows everybody, this has advantages and disadvantages. Possibilities of networking are good. There is a basis for the exchange of experiences and joint strategy development. However, it is also difficult for new organisations or actors to join this network. In my opinion, the challenge for our sector of human rights organisations is in being recognized as experts also in the sense of political counselling and to maintain this status. This also includes that also expertship is recognized and paid for according to its value and is not only “listened to”. Furthermore, it will be important to go on with networking and joint strategy development also with civil society actors – and not to neglect focussing on the respective core competences in this context.

Katrin Wladasch is a lawyer and a political scientist, founding and board member of the ZARA association, an expert of anti-discrimination work and citizenship education. Years ago she coordinated the network of Austrian HR-NGOs, and for years she has been doing capacity building for human rights-NGOs in Europe.

Frauenstiftung (Women’s Foundation), Judith Cerwenka

In the future, to be able to build up and extend civil strong society co-operations – and most of all in the context of the EU 27 – it will at first have to be about making terms clear. In Austria the terms “Third Sector”, “and ”non-profit sector” are often equated. The concept of social economy is less common in Austria, rather in scientific and EU contexts. In my opinion, the term “civil society” means the public-political space of the acting of social actors beyond market, state, and political party interests.

Paradoxically, in order of making civil society stronger it will be about making clearer the features of contributions by members, market, and state, whereas they will increasingly become blurred, among others simply because several member states are already not able or willing anymore to fulfill their social tasks as being rooted in their political programmes (on the way towards a “European social model”?) or outsource them. Thus, in Austria the tax deductibility of financial donations, just as new models of co-operation (e. g. public-social-private-partnership), will gain significance. Established organisations of the Third Sector have changed their nature (some of them already belong – more or less voluntarily – to the public sector or the market sector), at the same time there is potential for employment with informal CSO groups not yet belonging to the Third Sector (“Tomorrow’s Third Sector”). From the point of view of women’s organisations it may be stated

that still the Third Sector offers far more possibilities of employment than average, despite restricted possibilities and reduced chances of advancement due to vertical and horizontal segregation, the reduction of which in Austria is still behind in EU comparison.

Thus, it will be about transformation processes in respect of democratic structures of enterprises, equality of opportunity, voluntariness in the wider sense of the word, the status of being non-profit making, preservation of the ability to be critical by way of being independent of funding, the philosophies and ethics of enterprises and their ability to network, the latter particularly in respect of different concepts and histories of civil society in “Old Europe” or of CSO traditions in the CEE and SEE member states of the EU.

Topically, there will be a trend towards extending the range, e. g. by way of corporate citizenship, CSR, global strategies. I could imagine a shift of emphasis, e. g. towards human rights and environment, by way of East-West differences and the potential to influence of some EU member states, certainly not only numbers of population will count in this context. Thus, “civil society” will go on to develop towards being a collection of wishes, inter- and intra-culturally, onto which the most different expectations and hopes will be projected.

Judith Cerwenka, MBA, an EU project co-ordinator and Deputy CEO of the Frauenstiftung (Women's Foundation) Steyr, has been managing more than 20 projects in the socio-cultural context and was invited to multi-stakeholder committees as an NGO representative, such as STRAT. AT, the National Strategic Reference Framework for Austria. She is a member of the Forum Nachhaltiges Österreich (Forum Sustainable Austria), of the EFRE Advisory Committee Upper Austria, a Soroptimist with long years standing, and board member of The World of NGOs.

Karim Saad

Each civil society initiative is of enormous significance. Peaceful working and living together can only be supported by active parts of society. Participation must be at all levels and in most different ways.

Due to experiences from Austrian history, many people deal very sensitively with the topic of civil society. Unfortunately, also “looking away” in case of injustice is one integral part. Despite a number of organisations in the field of human rights, also Austria has still a lot to learn here.

In my opinion, the biggest challenge is the integration of Austrian minorities. It is high time to consider “being foreign” a present from which the population will benefit. Linguistic and religious variety may help with the development of a social dynamics which will serve the country as a whole. Precisely fear of Islam and Muslims must be mentioned in this context. But also wide-spread anti-Semitism, homophobia, and racist statements towards coloured fellow citizens count among the problems to be solved. Only by way of living and working together and the collective awareness that globalisation, climate change, and the problem of resources can only be solved by common action a civil society at the highest level will be possible.

Karim Saad MA is one of the founders of the Dokumentationsarchiv Islamophobie (Documentary Archive Islamophobia) (DAI) and the editor of the Muslim online magazine KISMET, www.kismetonline.at.

Milestones of Austrian civil society

- 1848 The European revolutions leave their marks: demands for democratic structures, civil rights, freedom of assembly and speech lastingly shake the traditional structures of rule.
- 1867 The first act on regulating associations and clubs is passed, it stays valid for 135 years, it makes the foundation of ideational associations easy and determines the self-obligation of associations.
- 1918 The end of the Habsburg Monarchy and the declaration of the Republic of Austria result in renewed mobilization of civil society.
- 1945 The end of the Second World War and the occupation results in Austria being influenced by four foreign powers, in the context of reconstruction Austria decides for the system of “Sozialpartnerschaft” as a means of mediating the interests of society.
- 1951 The act on regulating associations and clubs from 1867 for ideational associations is “re-announced”.
- 1955 The “Staatsvertrag” (Treaty) is signed, Austria regains her sovereignty, the occupation powers leave the country, a new national consciousness is established by declaring “everlasting neutrality” in the heart of Europe.
- 1979 The United Nations open up their fourth headquarters in Vienna, many international organisations settle in their environment.
- 1984 Resistance by civil society develops against the planned Danube power station at Hainburg and ends with the victory of the environmental movement.
- 1989 The fall of the “iron curtain” opens the borders to Eastern Europe and increases Austria’s position as a bridge between East and West.
- 1993 Sea of Light against hostility to strangers, 300,000 people demonstrate against an anti-foreigners attitude, this biggest demonstration of the Second Republic for the time being lays the foundation of the new human rights movement in Austria.
- 1995 Austria joins the European Union and thus opens up new possibilities for civil society to participate in political decision-making.
- 1997 The first Austrian women’s petition for a referendum, signed by 645,000 persons: a strong sign for women’s organisations not to lay down their demand for equality.
- 1997 The Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft (Austrian Research Association) founds the „Ways to Civil Society” working group, supporting interdisciplinary research on the situation of civil society in Austria and to discuss this with interested people.
- 1998 Austria occupies the position of EU Council Presidency for the first time. In this context, also civil society events are organised, the World of NGOs opens up its first “Conference on the Third Sector” with 18 countries contributing.

- 1999 Together with the European House Budapest the World of NGOs organises the “Building Bridges of Democracy” conference as the start of a series of yearly conferences on civil society in the Danube countries.
- 2000 The Freiheitliche Partei participating in the government results in the breakup of the Grand Coalition and triggers off serious resistance by civil society groups, the peak: “Thursdays Demonstrations” and sanctions by the 14 EU member states.
- 2000 Two events characterise the scene: “sector3/culture: Resistance, Cultural work, Civil Society” starts the debate among civil society actors, and “VISIONALE, Fair of Citizens’ Groups and Organizations of Civil Society” provides a new basis for inner-sectoral networking.
- 2001 Start of the EU’s EQUAL joined initiative, it requires extended participation of NGOs in the frame of “development partnerships” and makes social economy more alive.
- 2002 The new act on regulating associations and clubs becomes valid, it reduces the effort of founding, differentiates between small and big associations, and increases control.
- 2003 “GLOCALIST Review” enters the stage, the digital magazine for NGOs & NPOs and the dialogue among civil society, it reaches about 35,000 readers a week.
- 2004 For the first time the EU extends towards Eastern Europe and thus makes a significant step towards the “resurrection” of European civil society.
- 2006 Austria’s second EU Council Presidency results in a variety of events in which civil society participates, EU issues have been established in Austria.
- 2006 The Federal Ministry of the Interior opens up the new Central Register of Associations and makes the free of charge-search for individual Austrian associations in the Internet possible.
- 2007 The EU’s second Eastern European extension renews the co-operation of authorities and organisations with Romania and Bulgaria . EU guidelines on equality of opportunity, the fight against poverty, and social services result in new debating.
- 2008 In April the Austrian parliament passes the EU Reform Treaty without a referendum.

Civil society organisation

Human rights and anti-racism

SOS Mitmensch

Pressure group for human rights and anti-racism in Austria.
www.sosmitmensch.at/

Plattform für Menschenrechte

A regional alliance for human rights, situated in Salzburg
www.menschenrechte-salzburg.at

ENARA, European Network against Racism Austria

<http://enara.sosmitmensch.at>

Zara

Counselling anti-racism organisation, reporting racist incidents in Austria.
www.zara.or.at/

Development policy

Globale Verantwortung – Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Entwicklung und Humanitäre Hilfe

The Austrian network for development co-operation and policy.
www.globaleverantwortung.at

Licht für die Welt – Christoffel Entwicklungszusammenarbeit

Development co-operation organisation committed to helping blind persons and persons with eye diseases.
www.licht-fuer-die-welt.at

Environment and climate change

ÖkoBüro - Koordinationsstelle österreichischer Umweltorganisationen

Co-ordinating network of organisations active in the areas of environmental, nature and animal protection.
www.oekobuero.at

Umweltdachverband

Federation of organisations active in the areas of nature and environmental protection.
www.umweltdachverband.at

Global 2000 - die österreichische Umweltschutzorganisation

Environmental organisation.
www.global2000.at

Vier Pfoten Österreich – Tierschutzorganisation

Animal protection.
www.vierpfoten.at

Culture

IG Kultur Österreich

Network and lobby for organisations engaged in independent and autonomous cultural work in Austria.
www.igkultur.at

WUK – Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus

Open space for cultural initiatives.
www.wuk.at

KUPF - Kulturplattform OÖ

Regional network of cultural initiatives and organisations in Upper Austria.
www.kupf.at

ARTWORKS – Artistic Services in the Third Sector

Network dedicated to culture & employment.
www.equal-artworks.at

Media

Verband Freier Radios Österreich

Federation of non-commercial radios in Austria.
www.freie-radios.at

IPI - International Press Institute

NGO network for freedom of press.
www.freemedia.at

Social and welfare policy

Armutskonferenz

Austrian Network against Poverty and Social Exclusion.
www.armutskonferenz.at

Caritas Österreich

Relief and aid organisation of the catholic church.
www.caritas.at

Diakonie Österreich

Protestant aid organisation.
www.diakonie.at

Volkshilfe Österreich

Social welfare organisation.
www.volkshilfe.at/

Hilfswerk Österreich

Organisation providing social & health care services, child care and support for families in Austria.
www.hilfswerk.at

Women's issues

Netzwerk österreichischer Frauen- und Mädchenberatungsstellen

Austrian umbrella organisation of Counselling Centres for Women and Girls.
www.netzwerk-frauenberatung.at

Verein autonomer österreichische Frauenhäuser, Informationsstelle gegen Gewalt

Austrian Women's Shelter Network, Information Center Against Violence.
www.aoef.at

Frauenring

Federation and platform for organisations active in the field of women rights and equal treatment of women and men.
www.frauenring.at

Children and youth

BJV - Bundesjugendvertretung

Austrian National Youth Council.

www.jugendvertretung.at

SOS-Kinderdorf

SOS Children's Villages association.

www.sos-kinderdorf.at

Elderly people

Österreichischer Seniorenrat

Umbrella organisation and interest group for senior citizen organisations.

www.seniorenrat.at

People with disabilities

Österreichischer Zivil-Invalidenverband

The Austrian Association for Civil Disabled Persons.

www.oeziv.at

ÖAR - Österreichische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Rehabilitation

Austrian National Council of Disabled Persons.

www.oeaer.or.at

Migrants and asylum seekers

Asylkoordination Österreich - Verein von AusländerInnen- und Flüchtlingshilfsorganisationen und –betreuerInnen

Asylum co-ordination Austria, network of organisations active in the assistance of refugees and asylum seekers.

www.asyl.at

Beratungszentrum für Migranten und Migrantinnen

Counselling centre for migrants in Austria.

www.migrant.at

Verein ZEBRA

Intercultural centre for counselling and therapy for migrants, asylum seekers and their families

www.zebra.or.at

maiz - Autonomes Zentrum von & für Migrantinnen

Regional organisation by and for migrant women strengthening their political and cultural participation.

www.maiz.at

Lesbian and gay interests

HOSI Wien – Homosexuelle Initiative Wien

Austria's first lesbian and gay organisation.

www.hosiwien.at/

Health

Aids Hilfe Wien

Support centre for aids and prevention of aids.

www.aids.at

Netzwerk Frauengesundheitszentren Österreich

Network of Women's Health Centers in Austria.

www.fgz.co.at

Omega. Verein für Opfer von organisierter Gewalt und Menschenrechtsverletzungen, Gesundheitsstelle Graz

Health centre for victims of organised violence.

www.omega-graz.at

Education and science

Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft

The Austrian Research Association.

www.oefg.at

ZSI – Zentrum für Soziale Innovation

Centre for Social Innovation

www.zsi.at

Österreichische Gesellschaft für Politische Bildung

Austrian association for civic and citizenship education.

www.politischebildung.at

ARGE Bildungshäuser

Network of educational centres in Austria.

www.arge-bildungshaeuser.at

Economic policy

Attac Österreich - Netzwerk für eine demokratische Kontrolle der Finanzmärkte

Network for Democratic Control of International Financial Markets in Austria.

www.attac.at

NeSoVe Netzwerk Soziale Verantwortung.

The Austrian Network Social Responsibility, coalition of NGOs for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

www.sozialeverantwortung.at

bdv Austria - Bundesdachverband für Soziale Unternehmen

Federation of social enterprises.

www.bdv.at

Cross-sector issues

The World of NGOs

Information and networking platform for the Third Sector in Austria.

www.ngo.at

IÖGV Interessensgemeinschaft Österreichischer Gemeinnütziger Vereine

Advocacy and lobbying platform for non-profit organisations in Austria.

www.iogv.at

IGFÖ Interessensgemeinschaft Freiwilligenzentren Österreichs

Lobbying platform for volunteer centres in Austria.

www.freiwilligenzentrum.at

ARGE Selbsthilfe-Verbände

Consortium of self-help organisations.

www.selbsthilfe-oesterreich.at

PaN – Dachverband aller österreichisch-ausländischen Gesellschaften

Federation of Austrian-Foreign Societies.

www.dachverband-pan.org

EU Civis - Glossary

advocacy: the act or process of defending or maintaining a cause or proposal. An organisation may have advocacy as its mission (or part of its mission) to increase public awareness of a particular issue or set of issues.

accountability: the capacity to account for one's actions; or as a representative of one's organisation, to account for either your actions or the actions of your organisation. The term is usually used in the voluntary sector to refer to the responsibility a non-profit organisation has to inform donors of the manner in which their gifts were used.

capacity building: the process of strengthening the potential for nonprofit organisations to respond to the needs of the community they serve.

civil society organisation: voluntarily formed citizens' organisations which express and actively address the varied complex needs of society; strengthen pluralism and diversity; mediate between the citizen and the state, the citizen and the economic power; and establish mechanisms by which government and the market can be held accountable by the public. Membership in civil society organisations encourages individuals to act as citizens in all aspects of society rather than bowing to or depending on state power and beneficence. The terms civil society organisations (CSOs), nonprofit organisations (NPOs), voluntary organisations, third sector organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are often used as synonyms. Though they share a similar general meaning, their connotations are somewhat different. When voluntary associations and private foundations are mentioned as civil society organisations, the emphasis is on the role they play in social participation, advocacy, self-help, and interest articulation.

civil dialogue: as specified by Article 47 of the Constitutional Treaty, an important feature of participatory democracy is that the European Union institutions have to "maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society".

contracting out services: local governments have increasingly engaged in partnerships with nonprofit organisations in their community to deliver certain public services. Contracting out services to non-profits may offer cost and/or quality advantages over government production.

corporate social responsibility: a concept based on the approach that businesses consider the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, suppliers, employees, communities and other stakeholders, as well as the

environment and the community they work. This obligation is seen to extend beyond the statutory obligation to comply with legislation and sees organisations voluntarily taking further steps to improve the quality of life for employees and their families as well as for the local community and society at large.

European Commission's White Paper on European Governance:

The debate on European governance, launched by the Commission in its White Paper of July 2001, concerns all the rules, procedures and practices affecting how powers are exercised within the European Union. The aim is to adopt new forms of governance that bring the Union closer to European citizens, make it more effective, reinforce democracy in Europe and consolidate the legitimacy of the institutions. The Union must reform itself in order to fill the democratic deficit of its institutions. This governance should lie in the framing and implementation of better and more consistent policies associating civil society organisations and the European institutions. It also entails improving the quality of European legislation, making it clearer and more effective. Moreover, the European Union must contribute to the debate on world governance and play an important role in improving the operation of international institutions.

foundation: organisations with endowments established to pursue durable public purposes. Their founders can be either private persons or organisations with legal personalities. Unlike associations, foundations do not have members. They are managed by a board. Their founders are not allowed to have a significant influence on the decisions of this board. Private foundations can take several different forms, including operating foundations (e.g. foundations operating schools, nursing homes, health and cultural institutions; providing social services; publishing books and journals; managing local radio and television stations, etc.); grant seeking foundations exclusively supporting public institutions such as libraries, theatres, museums, schools, universities, hospitals, research institutes that established them or pursuing particular aims and projects such as the creation of monuments, organisation of festivals, or development of art collections; grant-making foundations that support either projects or organisations; and corporate foundations mostly supporting present or former employees of the companies.

social cohesion: the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity.

social dialogue: the process referring to the discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions undertaken by the social partner organisations between public authorities, employees' and employers' organisations. At European level, social dialogue takes two main forms - a bipartite dialogue between the European employers and trade union organisations, and a tripartite dialogue involving interaction between the social partners and the public authorities. European social dialogue has resulted in a variety

of outcomes, including the adoption of over 300 joint texts by the European social partners. Combining the values of responsibility, solidarity and participation, European social dialogue complements the national practices of social dialogue which exist in most Member States.

transparency: Article 255 of the EC Treaty gives any citizen of the Union, and any natural or legal person residing in a Member State, the right of access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. In addition, access to documents must be facilitated through the implementation of an electronic public register. The concept of transparency refers to the openness of the Community institutions and to their clear functioning. Transparency is linked to the citizens' demands for wider access to information and EU documents and for greater involvement in the decision-making process which would help foster a feeling of closeness to the Union.

volunteer: persons who enter into or offer themselves for a service of their own free will; volunteers are not receiving any remuneration for their work/expertise.

voluntary association: autonomous membership organisations formed voluntarily for a purpose agreed upon by their members and stated in their founding articles. Associations must have registered members who organise to actively pursue the associations' aims. Although membership organisations are not necessarily called voluntary associations and special laws and government decrees may specify rules for some of them, the basic legal regulation of voluntary associations applies to all such organisations, including societies, clubs, self-help groups, federations, trade unions, mass organisations, social organisations, etc. These organisations can be formed around common interests, intentions, concerns, hobbies, personal problems, age, residence, profession, occupation, or support for particular institutions, ideas, actions.